

IN THE CLAIMS

1-27. (canceled)

28. (currently amended) A content server for distributing upgraded content data, comprising:

a network interface for receiving an upgrade request from a user for content data previously downloaded by the user from the content server as base data of a first format; wherein the upgrade request specifies a target format of a higher quality than the first format;

a storage unit having a user-related information section for checking user-related information of the base data previously downloaded by the user;

an upgrading-data generating unit for generating upgrading data of the content data to upgrade the previously downloaded base data of the first format to the target format, the upgrading-data being generated on a user-to-user basis by reviewing a usage-history of the user to determine the first format and then calculating the difference between the data in the first format and the data in the target format; and

the network interface transmitting the upgrading data to the user in response to the upgrade request,

the base data representing the content at a first quality, and the upgrading data being difference data that is combined with the base data to generate data representing the content at a second quality that is higher than the first quality, and

the difference data being formed by subtracting the data in the first format from the data in the target format.

29. (previously presented) The content server according to claim 28, wherein the base data includes a header comprising content-grade identification information indicating the first format.

30. (previously presented) The content server according to claim 28, wherein the higher quality is at least one of a higher sampling frequency and a higher bit rate of the content data.

31. (currently amended) A personal terminal for the playback of content data, comprising:

a network interface for sending an upgrade request to a content server for content data previously downloaded by a user as base data of a first format and receiving upgrading-data of the content data in response; wherein the upgrade request specifies a target format of a higher quality than the first format, the upgrading-data being generated on a user-to-user basis by reviewing a usage-history of the user to determine the first format and then calculating the difference between the data in the first format and the data in the target format;

a content-data combining unit for combining the upgrading data with the previously downloaded base data, whereby the base data is upgraded to the target format; and

an audio-signal processing unit for playback of the upgraded base data having the target format,

the base data representing the content at a first quality, and the upgrading data being difference data that is combined with the base data to generate data representing the content at a second quality that is higher than the first quality, and

the difference data being formed by subtracting the data in the first format from the data in the target format.

32. (previously presented) The personal terminal according to claim 31, wherein the base data includes a header comprising content-grade identification information indicating the first format.

33. (previously presented) The personal terminal according to claim 31, wherein the higher quality is at least one of a higher sampling frequency and a higher bit rate of the content data.

34. (currently amended) A method of distributing upgraded content data, comprising the steps of:

receiving an upgrade request from a user for content data previously downloaded as base data of a first format from a server; wherein the upgrade request specifies a target format of a higher quality than the first format;

checking user-related information in the server of the base data previously downloaded by the user;

generating upgrading data of the content data to upgrade the previously downloaded base data of the first format to the target format, the upgrading-data being generated on a user-to-user basis by reviewing a usage-history of the user to determine the first format and then calculating the difference between the data in the first format and the data in the target format; and

transmitting the upgrading data to the user in response to the upgrade request,

the base data representing the content at a first quality, and the upgrading data being difference data that is combined with the base data to generate data representing the content at a second quality that is higher than the first quality, and

the difference data being formed by subtracting the data in the first format from the data in the target format.